

Greece

Contents

- 1. National context
 - 1.1 Population, economic and social characteristics
 - 1.2 Description of the types of education and training (formal and informal) that occur in a country
 - 1.3 Practices and organisations
- 2. Policy environment
- 3. Past and current initiatives and projects in Schools
 - 3.1 "OEPEK"
 - 3.2 "Program for School Innovation"
 - 3.3 "Hellenic theatre/drama and education network (TENet-GR)"
 - 3.4 "Hellenic Children's Museum"

National context

Population, economic and social characteristics

At the beginning of the 2009/10 school year in public and in private compulsory education (primary and lower-secondary school levels) there were enrolled 1 051 297 and 75 828 students correspondingly. More generally, in January 1, 2009 the estimated population aged 0 to 29 years numbered 3 638 2000 individuals comprising 32.3 % of the total population. The language of instruction at all levels of education is Greek. Concerning this Muslim community, there are minority schools in which the teaching of courses takes place in both the Greek and the Turkish language.

Description of the types of education and training (formal and informal) that occur in a country

Pre-primary education

Children aged 4 years may attend public or private kindergartens (nipiagogeia). Kindergarten attendance is compulsory for all 5 year olds; it remains optional, however, for four year olds. Public state-run kindergartens do not charge any fees. Parents pay full tuition fees for their child to attend private kindergartens. Children enrol in nipiagogeia according to the family's place of residence.

Administratively, nipiagogeia are considered part of primary education. They follow national curricula for the kindergarten level that have been developed by the Pedagogical Institute. The maximum class size is limited to 25 pupils. The pupils have a 9 month school year (11 Sept. to 15 June) and a daily program lasting from 8:15 to 12:15; unless they attend all day kindergartens (Oloimera Nipiagogeia) where children may arrive as early as 7:00 and leave as late as 16:00. Nipiagogeia operate from 1st of September till 21st of June. Education and care for children 4 years of age and under is provided at child centres (paidikoi stathmoi) and at 'infant' centres (vrefonipiakoi stathmoi) – the latter from 6 months of age – that are municipal, i.e. public, or private. Attendance is optional for this age group.

Municipal/community child centres are run by the local municipalities and communities. Parents pay a small fee for these child centres, though fees can be waived for certain categories of families. Private child centres charge full fees. During the 2009/10 school year, there were 146 250 youngsters enrolled in public kindergartens and 11 658 in private ones. Of children attending public kindergartens, 36.3 % were 4 years old and 51.2 % boys. In private kindergartens, 21.7 % of the pupils were 4 years old and 47.8 % girls.

Compulsory education

(i) Phases

Education is compulsory for the age cohort 5-15 years and is divided into the following levels: There are also 3 years of lower secondary education provided by Evening Gymnasia (Esperina Gymnasia) that are geared to the needs of working students and enrol students from the age of 14 years. In addition operate Ecclesiastic, Minority, Cross-Cultural, Peiramatika (Experimental), Music, Special Education Gymnasia etc.

(ii) Admissions criteria

Granted a kindergarten certificate, enrolment in public primary education is based solely on the pupil's place of residence. The same rule applies to the lower secondary school level, with the prerequisite that the student has obtained a school-leaving certificate from primary school. Education in Greece for all levels of public education is provided free of charge and all costs (transportation, books etc.) are covered by the state budget. Families may choose to enrol their children in private schools where full tuition fees are charged. Increases in school tuition fees by private schools are negotiated with the General Secretariat for Commerce.

(iii) Length of school day/week/year

The school year is comprised of 175 days from the 11th of September to the 15th of June for primary schools and the 31th of May for lower secondary schools. Schools are open five days a week for 35 weeks per year. Instructional hours per week are from 23 to 35 depending on the grade or level. Each instructional hour lasts from 40 to 50 minutes. The number of instructional hours for the two first grades of primary education is 25 per week, reaching 30 hours in the next four grades and 35 hours for all three grades of lower secondary education.

(iv) Class size/student grouping

According to Ministerial Decisions, primary classes may have up to a maximum of 25 students; at the secondary education level, classes may have up to 30 students. Students are grouped by age, thus creating six grade levels in primary education and three in secondary. All schools are mixed gender.

Primary classes have one teacher for all subjects, with the exception of physical education, foreign languages and music which are taught by subject specific teachers. Secondary education students have different teachers for each subject.

(v) Curriculum control and content

The national curricula for primary and secondary education are developed by the Pedagogical Institute and approved by the ministry. The current Cross-Thematic Curricular Framework for compulsory education and accompanying subject syllabi reflect a more inter-disciplinary approach to knowledge. At the primary school level the national curriculum covers religion, Greek language, mathematics, history, environmental studies, geography, science, social and civic studies, arts studies (music et al.), two foreign languages and physical education. The program also includes a 'Flexible Zone' for the development of cross-curricular themes and creative activities.

The above subjects, except for environmental studies, are included in the lower secondary school curriculum which also covers ancient Greek, chemistry, biology, information and computer technology, home economics, technology and school vocational guidance. Teachers are required to follow the national curriculum and to use the approved textbook for each subject; taking into account, however, the particular needs and features of their classes as far as teaching methods are concerned. At the beginning of each school year, the Pedagogical Institute issues directions for teachers on teaching approaches and aims according to subject area. The school textbooks, written according to the criteria set in Cross-Thematic Curricular Framework, are evaluated by the Pedagogical Institute and recommended to the ministry of Education for final approval.

(vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

At the primary school level, students are assessed by their teachers throughout the school year. Periodical and annual assessments are descriptive and also include letter grades from the third year of primary school. Students are generally promoted to the next grade, except in cases of insufficient attendance. In the rare case where a student might need to repeat a grade – based on teacher assessment – a strict process of consultation precedes this outcome. Students completing the sixth grade (end of primary school) receive the primary school leaving certificate (Apolytirio Dimotikou) which serves for admission to lower secondary school (Gymnasio). In lower secondary schools teachers assess students based on daily work, written tests, assignments and end-of-year written review examinations, Graptēs Anakefalaiotikēs Exetaseis. Promotion is based on achievement. Students who achieve an overall passing grade, at the end of the third year of lower secondary school receive a school-leaving certificate (Apolytirio Gymnasiou), which grants access to senior high school.

Post-compulsory education/upper secondary and post-secondary level

(i) Types of education

Lyceums (Lykeia) offer a three year course and are of two types: the Geniko Lykeio (G.L.) that provides general/academic studies and the Epangelmatiko Lykeio (EPA.L.) that combines general education with technical-vocational studies. In 2007/08 of all first and second year Lykeio students, 23 % enrolled in vocational Lykeia and 77 % in general Lykeia. There are also evening lyceums (Esperino Geniko Lykeio and Esperino Epangelmatiko Lykeio) that offer a 4 year part-time course (15-19 years of age) and in 2007/08 enrolled about 5 % of Lykeio students. The Epangelmatikēs Scholes (EPA.S.) offer a two-year course organized according to occupational area, which may extend to three years if on-the-job training is provided. Other Ministries besides the ministry of Education also operate such

vocational training schools providing courses in their area of responsibility. The post-secondary Instituta Epangelmatikis Katartisis (I.E.K.) offer 4 semesters of initial vocational training, or in the case of vocational education graduates who followed a similar course, 2 semesters of further training. Certain courses of the I.E.K. can also enrol Gymnasio graduates. Currently there are 114 public I.E.K. (no fees) and 53 private I.E.K. (fee paying).

At the same time, private institutions offering services at post-secondary level ('Post-secondary Education Centres') are classified as belonging in the informal post-secondary education and training realm according to the relevant Law 3848/2010. For their establishment and operation, licenses are required that are granted by the ministry of Education Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs while the study or other certificates they provide are not academically equal to those granted within the framework of the Greek post-secondary system of formal education, (e.g. Universities, Technological Education Institutes and the above mentioned I.E.K.). The provisions governing the establishment and operation of "Post-secondary Education Centres" are stipulated in Law 3696/2008 and 3848/2010. The abovementioned laws provide ground for Laboratories of Liberal Studies which offer non-typical vocational studies of a shorter period.

(ii) Admissions criteria

Holders of a lower secondary school-leaving certificate (Apolytirio Gymnasiou) may enrol in a Geniko or an Epangelmatiko Lykeio according to catchment area. Students who have successfully completed the entry year of Lykeio may then enrol in the first year of Epangelmatikes Scholes (EPA.S.); while Epangelmatiko Lykeio students can also opt to enrol in a school outside their catchment area when it offers a special field they are interested in. Students are also able to transfer between Geniko and Epangelmatiko Lykeio at the beginning of year two. Graduates of any type of post-compulsory secondary school, including vocational training schools, may enrol in the post-secondary Instituta Epangelmatikis Katartisis (IEK). Adult graduates of compulsory education may also enrol in an IEK, but only for certain courses.

(iii) Curriculum control and content

The Pedagogical Institute sets national curricula for all upper secondary schools. The curriculum for the Geniko Lykeio includes general education subjects (modern and ancient Greek language and literature, history, mathematics, sciences, religion, a foreign language, technology, social sciences, physical education) as well as electives and specialization subjects from year two which depend on the 'stream' followed (theoretic, scientific, technological). The curriculum of the Epangelmatiko Lykeio includes general education subjects similar to the above, as well as technical – vocational subjects that vary according to stream followed (technological, service, and maritime). EPA.S. (Vocational School) curricula include technical – vocational subjects and workshop courses. Class size in vocational education is limited to 25 students.

The curricula of the Instituta Epangelmatikis Katartisis (IEK) include both theoretical and practical components and emphasize new methods and skills that broaden the occupational options of adult students. Course offerings are the result of an ongoing process of consultation with social partners and are based on the recommendations of the Tri-party Consultative Committees of OEEK (the Organisation for Vocational Education and

Training), comprised of representatives of OEEK, employers and employees, that consider regional labour market needs and trends.

(iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Geniko and Epangelmatiko Lykeio students are assessed by teachers on the basis of their participation in daily classroom work, their performance on tests and on end of the year final examinations. To be promoted and to receive a Lyceum Diploma (Apolytirio Lykeiou), an average general mark of 9.5 out of 20 is required. Besides the Lyceum Diploma, a prerequisite for admission to tertiary education is achievement score on the 'Certificate' (Vevaiosi) which includes grades in six general education and 'stream' subjects that are examined at the national level. The general achievement score on this Certificate takes into account final year school grade, school level evaluation and grades on the six subjects of the national level examinations.

Epangelmatiko Lykeio graduates acquire, in addition to the above, a level 3 vocational education certificate (Ptychio Epangelmatikis Ekpaidefsis, epipedou 3) based on school level examinations.

Assessment for promotion and graduation from the Epangelmatikes Scholes is conducted at the school level, and upon successful completion of their course, students receive a level 3 vocational education certificate (Ptychio as above), which in addition to employment, allows them to enrol in post secondary IEK.

Trainees at IEK (Post Secondary non-Tertiary Education) are assessed by their instructors during and upon completion of their training. Students who successfully complete an IEK course are awarded an Attestation of Training (Vevaiosi Epangelmatikis Katartisis) and then participate in external examinations conducted by the competent national or local committees to obtain a postsecondary level Diploma of Vocational Training (Diploma Epangelmatikis Katartisis, epipedou metadeuterothmias epangelmatikis katartisis).

Practices and organisations

Pre-primary and primary school teachers are degree (Ptychio) holders from a four-year university-level course, primarily from Pedagogic Schools. Lower and upper secondary education teachers hold university degrees, Ptychia, in their specialist subject after completing a four-year course and take a three-month introductory teacher training course upon appointment. Access to teaching posts in the state sector (pre-primary to secondary level) is determined by competitive examinations administered by Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (ASEP). Teachers at all levels of the state sector are civil servants.

Initial Training of Teachers

The initial training of pre-primary, primary, secondary education teachers lasts 4 years for all specialities. As for the teachers of Music, the duration of studies is fixed at 5 years in the Department of Music Studies at the Universities or around 9-10 years at musical academies for music teachers.

As for Special Education, primary education teachers receive 4-year basic training in the Pedagogical Department of Primary Education and Pre-primary Education Teachers at Volos, specialising in Special Education, or in the department of educational and social policy at the

University of Macedonia with specialisation in disabled persons. Teachers having acquired a postgraduate degree in school psychology are employed as educational staff of special education schools and integration departments.

Pre-primary Level of Education

The state's first concern about pre-primary Education was first manifested back in the late 19th century, when private citizens acquired the right to establish Pre-primary institutions, after securing a permit from the Ministry of Education. In 1956, one-class pre-primary institutions' teachers' courses were established at the Pedagogical Academies and operated for four years. Furthermore, following the establishment of the Pedagogical Departments at Universities in 1982, the said departments for Pre-primary teachers at the respective Universities undertook to provide university education to future Pre-primary teachers.

Primary Level of Education

The first institution (Didaskaleio) to train candidate teachers and initiate them into the "mutual teaching" (allilodidaskalia) method was founded in Argos in 1824. Later on, similar teachers' academies were founded in other towns and the duration of studies became three years. Subsequently, the teachers' academies were abolished and two-year, post-secondary teacher training was instituted at the Pedagogical Academies. Nowadays, by Law 1268/82, pedagogical departments for primary education have been established with four-year programmes in all Greek Universities.

Secondary Level of Education

After the establishment of the University of Athens (1837) and the National Technical University (1914) and up to the present day, the basic training of secondary school teachers in the departments related to their fields lasts for four or five years. In this overview of the evolution of the basic training of secondary school teachers, it is worth mentioning that, for the first time in 1897, a Chair of Pedagogy was established at the University of Athens as a form of positive response by the University to the views prevailing at the end of the 19th century that special preparatory training had to be provided to those who were going into the teaching profession.

The education of teachers for Technical and Vocational secondary school education was systematised for the first time in 1959 with the establishment of the School for Technical Education Teachers, which –after subsequent regulations– offered two kinds of education programmes: four-year studies of higher level education (Engineering and Technology Teachers' Institute) and one-year pedagogical training (Technical Pedagogy School).

In 2002 School for Technical Education Teachers was abolished and the Higher School for Teachers of Technological Education, was established, which belongs together with the Technological Vocational Educational Institutions in the Technological Branch of Higher Education.

Debates and Developments

The need to train all primary and secondary education teachers in pedagogy and teaching regardless of their specialisation is an issue being considered by the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs and related bodies.

In addition to theoretical training – teachers must also:

- Keep abreast of developments in specific scientific, pedagogical, technological, social, political economic fields directly related to their work.
- Attempt to obtain the necessary methodological tools enabling a better understanding and critical approach to developments that will result in conscious choices, better organisation and greater efficiency in handling their teaching work.
- Be informed on matters pertaining to school life, such as: Organisation and administration of a school unit, dynamics, problems and management of the student community, management of problematic situations, multicultural issues, etc.
- Be well versed in the use of New Information and Communication Technology. This can be accomplished by attending relevant EU programmes, developing counselling services/mechanisms in the school unit, etc.
- Be trained to teach in a cross-cultural school setting.
- Be trained to act as a mediator in conflict situations at school
- Be aware of issues related to lifelong learning and continuous education in their field.
- In particular, teachers in Secondary Technological and Vocational Education should refresh their pedagogical and technical knowledge, as imposed by swift developments in technology and the changes these entail in the labour market.

In order to achieve these goals and to assist in teaching generally, the Ministry of Education has adopted actions, such as ‘Comenius 2’ in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007 – 2013). This comprises the following actions: a) European collaboration plans for training school teaching staff and b) personal mobility – training activities. In the first case, the sine qua non condition for the approval of such partnerships is the participation of an institution involved in initial or even in-service training of teachers, with registered offices in one of three countries. This enables educator’s to have access to further training in each school year.

Institutions for Teachers’ Training

Institutions for Training pre-primary Teachers

Training for teachers in pre-school education is provided by the Pedagogical Departments for Pre-primary Teachers, which have been established at the Universities of Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras, Ioannina, Thrace, Crete, the Aegean, Thessaly, and at the Department for Pre-primary Teachers of the University of Western Macedonia in Florina.

Institutions for Training Primary Education Teachers

Training for primary school teachers is provided by the Pedagogical Departments for Primary Education which have been set up at the Universities of Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras, Ioannina, Thrace, Crete, the Aegean, Thessaly, and at the Pedagogical Department of the University of Western Macedonia in Florina.

Institutions for Training Secondary Education Teachers

A candidate secondary school teacher pursues his/her basic studies in his/her own subject fields and receives his/her pedagogical training in the following educational institutions:

- At University for the following fields :Theology, Greek Language and Literature, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Natural History, Biology, Geology, French Language, English Language, German Language, Art Subjects, Economics, Sociology, Physical Education, Civil Engineering, Architecture, Surveying, Mechanical Engineering, Electronic Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Nautical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Metallurgy, Chemical Metallurgy, Radio-Electricity Physics, Computer Science, Law and Political Science, Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacology, Agronomy, Forestry and Natural Environment, Nursing, Home Economics, Music,: Theatrical Studies,: Methodology, History and Theory of Science.
- At the Higher School for Teachers of Technological Education () a) for teachers of Electricians, Mechanics, Electronics, Infrastructure Civil Works and of Civil Building Works, b) offering one-year pedagogical training to graduates of various specializations of Higher and Technological Education (paragraphs 1 and 3) who wish to be appointed as teachers in the Technical and Vocational education.
- At Technological Education Institutes for the fields Graphic Arts, Business Administration, Accounting, Medical Laboratory, Dental technician, Assistant Social Worker, Nursing, Plant Production, Animal Production, Fish Farming-Fishery, Farm Machinery, Forestry, Farm Management, Vehicles, Textiles, Radiology, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Graphic Design, Interior Design, Conservation of Antiquities and Works of Art, Photography, Green House Cultivation and Floriculture, Infant Care.
- At the Vocational Lyceums, the Vocational Schools, the former Technical Vocational Upper Secondary Schools or the former Technical and Vocational Schools or from the Secondary Education Department of the Technical Pedagogy School there are teachers there are teachers teaching subjects of a technical or workshop nature. Such specialisations include: Drafting, mechanical engineering technicians, automobile mechanics, refrigeration mechanics, construction technicians, electricians, electronics technicians, chemistry laboratory technicians, merchant navy mechanics, office employees, accounts office employees, interior design, computer operators, cutting-sewing, hair-dressing, mineralogists, clock-makers, silver- and goldsmiths, dental technicians, textiles, aircraft fitters, medical assistants and biology laboratory technicians., electrical technicians, mechanical technicians, electronics technicians, builders, practical mechanics, practical electricians, welders, chemist's assistants, motor-mechanics, refrigeration mechanics, plumbers, carpenters, cutters-sewers.

Students are taught through a combination of methods, including lectures, tutorials, practice teaching, assignments of projects and in any other ways selected by the faculty member who notifies the students accordingly.

Policy environment

Ongoing reforms and policy initiatives

Ongoing reforms and policy initiatives related to 'ET 2020' strategic framework
Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality

Lifelong learning strategies

As part of an effort focusing on citizen's needs aiming at decreasing social inequalities by overcoming educational deadlocks, a new law 3879/2010 on lifelong learning has been in force since September 2010. It is titled "Development of Lifelong Learning and other provisions" and its goal is the development of lifelong learning via alternative educational paths as well as the association of lifelong learning bodies with those of quality assurance so as to successfully connect lifelong learning with occupation and to provide these type of education beyond the formal educational system. This specific framework has clear principles setting up qualitative and quantitative realistic targets as well as establishing specific political proposals for carrying out these targets. It also responds to the current needs of changing the educational model and of focusing the state's interest on student's benefit. European Qualifications Framework

The ministry of Education Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs in 2010, as part of its new policy on lifelong learning, proposed the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework in accordance to the European Qualifications Framework. This effort was developed because to date there was not any unified system as to qualification recognition and accreditation including all types of education, training and professional experience. The goal of organizing a unified National Qualifications Framework is the association, recognition and accreditation of all types and levels of formal, informal and non-formal learning on the basis of an agreement certifying quality and mutual trust between the state and social partners. In this context, the National Qualifications Framework will enable transparency in vocational qualification, it will facilitate access and progress in lifelong learning processes and it will support in a better way the relationship between education/training and employment. The planning and establishment of National Qualifications Framework will take into account from the beginning all social bodies contributing in any way in education and training in Greece: accreditation bodies, agencies for recognition of academic titles and professional qualification, quality assurance bodies, social partners and of course the citizens. The creation of a National Qualifications Framework was completed within 2010. The public consultation on NQF started in the beginning of March and ended in the beginning of September 2010 and the law 3879/2010 established it.

Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training

Language learning

The improvement of state foreign language education is carried out in cooperation with the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens with a goal of forming a single comprehensive plan and of designing the necessary studies. A new study program will be formed for all modern languages included in the curriculum. It will abide by the rules of the

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for language learning of the Council of Europe (CoE), which sets a six grade scale of assessment and has been adopted by the State Language Certification. Therefore, this programme will point out what is needed of every Greek user of a foreign language at every level – from A1 (breakthrough) to C2 (mastery). From September 2010, the pilot English language programme will begin in 60 primary education schools (Dimotika) and 30 lower secondary education schools (Gymnasia) in different prefectures of the country. The proposition is graduation from primary schools to lead to an A2 or a B1 certification and graduation from lower secondary education schools to a B2 certification.

Professional development of teachers and trainers

Aiming at completing the program within three years' time, the ministry of Education starts the in-service training of all teachers in September 2010. This process will try to take advantage of the progress of Information and Communication Technologies. The in-service training focuses on: a) discipline, b) teaching methods, c) new technologies and d) the guidance and administrative staff of education. The training programs comprise: a) a basic seminar, b) distance learning and c) a feedback seminar. The duration of in-service training will be 200 hours, of which 50 hours are viva voce and 150 are distance learning. The process will be specialized and bound to the forthcoming changes of the curricula which teachers are called to implement but also to contribute to form their final content. Respectively, there will be training in relation to the educational practices accompanying those programs. This training will commence at least six months before the pilot implementation of the new curricula and according to the rate the latter are effectuated.

The ongoing process of improving the staff involved to education comprises a change in the selection of the administrative staff of education. The equal access of teachers in the selection process for such posts as well as the widening of the basis of candidates is attempted through law 3848/2010. Selection process takes into account knowledge and competences acquired via professional experience. Training with the contribution of the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government (E.K.D.D.A.) in issues connected to administration of education is also obligatory. The formation of a framework of the administrative staff professional progress is served by the same law. Prerequisite of selection will be the participation in self-evaluation programmes and, at a second stage, in evaluation programmes. Except from the aforementioned law, a public consultation took place in June 2010 as part of a national teacher's in-service training strategy.

Basic skills in reading, mathematics and science

Through the new approach to the operation of primary and secondary education, the ministry of Education encourages the Pupil: a) to acquire better competence in speaking and writing the Greek language b) to get in touch with literature, theatre, music, history and, in general, culture c) to have a cognitive efficiency in the handling of mathematic concepts applied to everyday life d) to develop mathematic logic and abstractive ability e) To acquire respective knowledge and skills in sciences and in technology. Starting from the current school year, changes in the curricula and in the teaching methods as well as relative training of teachers aim at reaching these goals.

'New Skills for New Jobs'

Actions taking into account labour market skills needs in education in Greece have been taken by the National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training (EKEPIS), the Greek Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED) and the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (OEEK). These organisations, by using the Greek education and training system for developing new competences, respond to the labour market needs.

'Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality'.

Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship

Pre-primary education

Concerning social cohesion law 3518/2006 safeguards access to pre-school education even from the age of 4 years old for all children irrespectively of national, socio-economic or religious background of their families. From 1997, law 2525 established the All-Day pre-primary schools for serving working parents with their children.

Learners with special needs

In the field of special needs education, the basic principles of the ministry of Education policy aim at social integration of the disabled pupils and are as follows: No child with disability or special educational needs will face problems in enjoying the benefits of education. For this reason, all disabled pupils or pupils with special educational needs are monitored. They acquire 'pupil identification number' and are integral part of pupil population in a school.

Constitution of a special committee for the harmonization of the Greek educational legislation with the UN convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (December 2006) as well as the Greek Constitution in order to move towards the elimination of discrimination and social exclusion.

Use of all staff specialists in this field in order to respond to the growing demand for special needs education teachers. Forwarding physical accessibility and e-accessibility by developing specialized educational material. Establishment of proficiency certification procedure for blind and deaf children in Greek sign language and the creation of a certification mechanism of the Braille system.

Mapping, monitoring and evaluation of special needs education. The qualitative and quantitative mapping is the base for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of all educational actions and structures.

Establishment of the annual 'preparation and publication report of conclusions' following the appropriate methodology. The report will refer to the situation in special needs education with measurable evaluation of policies and measures implemented.

Innovation-friendly institutions

The pilot program of the School Network on Educational Innovation was applied in the 2010-2011 school year with innovative educational practices as part of the positive distinction logic. The innovative practices fight social inequalities by helping to reduce inequalities in educational outcomes and by improving general educational level. The system first will be applied for a year to schools of three regions and, after evaluation, to schools of 10 regions until 2013. In parallel, the educational support to vulnerable social groups will be carried out directly through three specific programmes (after public consultation a notice of competition has been already released): a) education of the Muslim minority in Thrace children; b) education of foreign and repatriated children and c) education of Roma children.

Other important ongoing reforms and policy initiatives at national level School Education

All-day primary schools plan

Gradually, all primary education schools are becoming all-day schools with a unified educational program. Pupils in those schools will attend foreign language classes leading to certification, they will do sports and they will become familiar with the arts or other creative activities. Study (single or collective) in the first grades, takes place within the working hours of the school. For the 2010 – 2011 school year a plan for direct interventions is forwarded. The details of the plan refer to:

- The reduction of the educational contents,
- The expansion of the compulsory working hours,
- The focus on Greek language and on mathematics,
- The aiming at foreign languages,
- The priority to ICT and
- The augmentation of hours for teaching culture and literature.

The 'new school' plan

The ministry of Education Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs seeking to confront problems related to the operation of schools and to the education offered to pupils suggests measures according to the 'pupil first' principle. Yet, it does not ignore other parties involved in the education system. The Ministry having incorporated the European Commission priorities on the Improvement of Competences for the 21st century (July 2008), and having taken into account the Primary and Secondary Education Council conclusions (November 2009) as well as the evaluation studies conducted by the Pedagogical Institute aims at creating 'the new school', so that new generations to be able to:

- Firmly step upon values and principles,
- Continue their effort to learn throughout their lives,
- Participate successfully in economic life and to have opportunities to upward social mobility,
- Act as responsible citizens and
- Be active citizens.

Within the 'new school' the common in the European Union strategic educational objectives will be served: a) development of lifelong learning, b) education quality improvement, c)

social cohesion and active citizenship and d) innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. The priorities previously described regarding lifelong learning, all-day primary education schools, use of ICT in in-service training of teachers, the enhancement of educational administrative staff role, the improvement of pupils' competence in the Greek language, the foreign languages pupils are taught and special needs education are parts of the reform taking place for the constitution of 'the new school'

On the basis of the aforementioned, teachers, pupils, parents and citizens were informed of the principles, the framework and the initial propositions on this issue. After public consultation in May 2010 the law 3848/2010 was ratified by the Greek Parliament regulating issues of 'the new school', and other wider educational issues concerning:

- a) The process of teacher appointment (proceeding of the competition, appointment in the new posts) whether the case of permanent staff or part-time staff, in both state and private education.
- b) The selection of other primary and secondary education staff such as School Advisors, heads of the Directorates of Education (Prefecture) and of the Education Offices (Province), the School Principals (prerequisites and selection criteria) and the councils choosing the specific staff.
- c) Issues of official alterations (transfers, detachments, transferences) and of teacher evaluation.
- d) The modernization of the university sector institutes of higher education including the selection of the instructional personnel, the distribution of books, access to higher education, research and so on. It also regulates issues of 'Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education' (ADIP).
- e) Religious education (ecclesiastic schools of lower and upper secondary education) and its staff.
- f) Finally, the Post-secondary Education Centres (former Colleges) and the General Secretariat for Research and Technology (the latter since the end of 2009 has been affiliated by the ministry of Education).

Higher Education

Wide reforms take place regarding higher education and the Bologna Process. Law 3794/2009 harmonized the operation of the university and technological sectors of higher education and put at the same level Universities and Technological Education Institutions (TEIs).

Youth

In 2010 the General Secretariat for Youth via the programme "Support of Initiatives for Youth 2010" attempts to support actions, programs and initiatives for youngsters, based on three thematic priorities: a) labour relations, employment, combat of unemployment, b) social integration – combat of social exclusion and c) environmental awareness, green growth, climate change, environment.

Research and technology

A major reform in the research area is ongoing in Greece. It is commonly accepted that the increase of the outlay on scientific research is the necessary prerequisite for the improvement of Greece's international competitiveness. For this reason and by taking into account the EUROPE 2020 strategy, the action plan for research in Greece sets the objective of 2 % until 2020 for the expenses for research and technological development, that is the tripling of the expenditure for research as a percentage of GNP approved until now. An action plan for the enhancement of research, technological development and innovation has been submitted in public consultation by the Greek Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs in the official site of the Greek government. The objective of the action plan is towards a new architecture of the Greek system of research and towards the unification of the research area, which is now cut up, as mentioned above, in various scientific areas. The newly elaborated National Strategic Framework for Research and Innovation (2010-2015) constitutes a turning point of the reform of the legislative framework of research in Greece and will have the form of a Programme-Framework for Research, comprising 5 different axes, research funding included. The so-called axes are the following: i) axe of targeted scientific/research works ii) axe of direct support of the innovation iii) axe of unified research area iv) axe of research infrastructure v) axe of research work staff.

Past and current initiatives and projects in Schools

"OEPEK"

The Organisation for the training of teachers is supervised and directed by the Ministry of Education. It is the national body responsible for designing and implementing the «official» training programmes for teachers of all levels of the Greek education system.

"Program for School Innovation"

The main goal of the PfSI is to provide training and support to K-9 teachers and schools in order for them to establish those conditions which favour sustainable educational innovation within the school environment. The PfSI addresses many aspects of school education and introduces a state-of-the-art pedagogical approach to instructional, competence-based design and assessment, deploying the Key Competencies (the new literacies) agenda, while it proposes action on two tracks: the school development and the teacher professional development.

"Hellenic theatre/drama and education network (TENet-GR)"

TENet's dual aim is to provide assistance for the performing arts in order that they can gain a central role in schools, and to contribute to the development of approaches and techniques, viewing theatre both as an art form and a learning tool. TENet-Gr is an "open platform" for exchanging different ideas on theatre/drama and education. TENet-Gr is a registered non-profit organization and operates as an association of teachers and artists. TENet-Gr is ordinary member of IDEA-International Drama/Theatre & Education Association. TENet-Gr supports and constantly updates its web page, www.TheatroEdu.gr with a plethora of educational material (news bulletin, e-journal, listings of theatre exercises and games, brief descriptions and analyses of theatre plays, e.t.c.).

"Hellenic Children's Museum"

The Hellenic Children's Museum, whose creative journey spans some 20 years, aims to encourage every child to discover, comprehend, learn, be happy and shape their self and the world which surrounds them with respect for individuality and emphasis on cooperation. It is the country's only multi-thematic, interactive museum specially designed for children. The Children's Museum is oriented to children up to 12 years of age, parents, educators and anyone else interested in learning.

The Children's Museum's central philosophy is based on the belief that real objects, actual experiences and recreation support and reinforce the learning procedure. The exhibits are specially designed to meet the needs and capabilities of children. Three-dimensional structures enable children to use all five senses in discovering elements of the world around them. The themes of exhibits are derived from children's interests, their day-to-day life and the needs of their educators. Through their interaction with exhibits at the Hellenic Children's Museum, children acquire knowledge of their natural, man-made and social environment, while improving their skills and establishing their personality. Examples of exhibit themes at the Children's Museum include "Loft", "The Deep", "Kitchen" and "Shadows". The museum receives some 50,000 children each year, whereas the various functions it has developed (external activities, seminars, museum items) enable it to come into contact with around 120,000 children and adults in total. The Children's Museum is a member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the Hands On! Europe Association of Children's Museums.